

DOMESTIC LIFE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

Correspondence Between W. H. Herndon, Esq., and Rev. James Smith—Mr. Lincoln's Religious Opinions—The Ann Rutledge Episode.

The following correspondence, which was originally published in the Dundee (Scotland) Advertiser of February 9, will be read with special interest on this side of the ocean. It grew out of the publication of some extracts from a lecture on the Domestic History of Mr. Lincoln by W. H. Herndon, his friend and law partner. The correspondence sufficiently explains itself.

EAST CAMO, Strathmore, February 1, 1867.—To the Editor of the Dundee Advertiser—Several weeks ago I read in the Dundee Advertiser an article which went round the papers, both in America and this country, headed "Curious Love Romance in the Life of Abraham Lincoln," which I was constrained to view as calculated to put a stigma on the character of the illustrious martyr, by representing him as one who was destitute of those finer feelings and affections which most necessarily adorn the character of every truly great and good man.

I lately received the following letter from the author of that article, which, in my opinion, not only opened the way, but rendered it my imperative duty to give him a rebuke in reply, of which I send you a copy, hoping its circulation will place our late beloved President and his family in a proper light before those who have read the shameful attack made upon them by the author of the "Ann Rutledge romance." I am, sir, most respectfully, your obedient servant,

JAMES SMITH, Late Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Springfield, Ill.

SPRINGFIELD, Ill., December 20, 1866.—Mr. Smith—My Dear Sir—I wish to ask of you a few questions. They are as follows:— 1. What year did you come to Springfield, Ill., as a preacher of the First Presbyterian Church, and what year did you leave?

2. Have you any writings—letters, or other such-like evidence—proofs to show that, while you were in this city, that Abraham Lincoln was converted to the belief that the Bible was God's special miraculous revelation; that he believed in special miraculous inspiration and miraculous conception—the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ, etc., as the orthodox Christian world teaches and preaches?

3. Was Mr. Lincoln an honest man? If you answer yes to the second and third questions, and produce written evidence, which you will please copy and send me as to the second question—why didn't he join your Church, the First Presbyterian Church of the City of Springfield?

If, in answer to the second question, you say you have no written or such-like evidence, please state to me what Mr. Lincoln did exactly and explicitly say on these questions. Give me his exact words, and not your understanding of them by any kind of implication. If you cannot give the exact words, give the words that are synonymous first, and, secondly, give the substance of the words.

It has become a matter of interest to me to know how to solve knowingly these questions. I knew you as a gentleman in this city for several years. I knew you as a Christian. As you were a gentleman before you were a Christian, I ask you in that capacity first to answer these questions, if you please, and then ask you ditto as a Christian to answer the questions—if you please.

I was Mr. Lincoln's law partner when you were here, had been before, and continued to be. Yours, truly, W. H. HERNDON.

EAST CAMO, Scotland, January 24, 1867.—W. H. Herndon, Springfield, Illinois—Sir—Your letter of the 20th December was duly received. In it you ask me to answer several questions in relation to the late illustrious President, Abraham Lincoln. With regard to your second question, I beg leave to say it is a very easy matter to prove that, while I was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, Mr. Lincoln did avow his belief in the Divine authority and inspiration of the Scriptures; and I hold that it is a matter of the last importance, not only to the present, but to all future generations of the great republic, and to all advocates of civil and religious liberty throughout the world that this avowal on his part, and the circumstances attending it, together with other interesting incidents illustrative of the excellence of his character, in my possession, should be made known to the public.

I am constrained, however, most respectfully to decline choosing you as the medium through which such communications shall be made by me. My reasons are as follows:— Early in December last an article went round the papers in this country, purporting to be part of a lecture delivered by you on Mr. Lincoln's life and past history, which I read with feelings of mingled indignation and sorrow, because, coming as it did from his intimate friend and law partner, it was calculated to do the character of that great and good man an incalculable injury, deeply to wound the feelings of his heart-broken widow and her orphan boys, and to place that whole family, both the dead and living, in a most unenviable light before the public.

In the article referred to, speaking of the death and grave of Miss Ann Rutledge, you represent Mr. Lincoln as having said, "That his heart, sad and broken, was buried there." You gave it as your opinion "that he never addressed another woman 'yours affectionately,'" that "he generally and characteristically abstained from the word 'love,'" that he never ended his letters "yours affectionately," but always signed them "Your friend, ABRAHAM LINCOLN."

Now, sir, I maintain that every reflecting person who believes your statements to be true, is bound to reply to your third question—Abraham Lincoln was not an honest man, for he assiduously and perseveringly sued for the hand, the heart, and the devotion for life of a young lady who was much inferior to her intelligence, her fine conversational powers, and capable of making herself very agreeable in any circle, and who could, if so disposed, have wedded with the first of the land. This he did when, according to you, all he had to give in return was a dead heart, buried in the grave of another woman, and he was in such a mental condition that he had to abstain from the use of the word love. Therefore when that young lady accepted his suit, and consented to become his wife, he could not even go so far as to say, "I am yours affectionately." Nay, more, when Abraham Lincoln had before that been wedded which dead alone can dissolve, he most solemnly promised before God and man to be a faithful, loving, and affectionate husband until parted by death, when, according to you, he had neither love nor affection to bestow. Therefore, your sentiments being true, Abraham Lincoln was worse than a dishonest man.

He was often absent from his family, and no doubt wrote his wife many letters. According to you, he never ended any of these

letters "Yours affectionately," but always "Your friend, Abraham Lincoln"—an insult which every lady of feeling and spirit would resent; and I must say, your statements being true, to me it is strange—nay, passing strange!—that the lady to whom these letters were addressed, who, you know as well as I do, possesses exquisite sensibility, spirit, and high sense of honor, not only did not resent the first insult of that sort, but patiently and silently submitted to the repetition of it from month to month, and from year to year. And what a cold-hearted man he must have been who for many years thus treated the wife of his bosom, whom he had solemnly promised to love and cherish!

Your statements also contain a most cruel, and I fear malignant attack upon his heart-stricken widow, as one for whom her husband entertained no love, no affection. Sir, was it not enough that she should be overwhelmed and stricken to the earth by the dreadful blow which has fallen upon her in the death of her husband, but you must come on the scene and mingle your poisonous chalice into that cup of woe which she must drink even to the dregs?

This is not all; but the necessary tendency of your statements is to put a public brand upon the boys of that great and good man, to whom you are under so many and great obligations, as the sons of a man who never loved their mother.

Such is the character of the martyred President which must necessarily be drawn from the statements made concerning him, and given to the public by his intimate friend and law partner for twenty years.

A law office is by no means the best field for judging the characters of each other by those who are brought in contact there. No, sir. It is in the family circle the man exhibits himself as he really is—his bearing towards his wife; his treatment of his children and dependents, his free and easy conversations with those who are admitted to that circle. There are to be found the best tests by which a man's character and feelings are to be determined, and no one enjoys better opportunities to be enabled to put a proper estimate upon the members of it than the pastor who is respected and esteemed by them—who has buried their dead and baptized their living; who, in seasons of sorrow, has administered to them those consolations which the Gospel of the Son of God can alone communicate; who is viewed by certain of them as the honored instrument in bringing them from darkness to light—from the degradation of sin and misery to faith in Jesus and the hope of glory; who by them is held to have been "true to them ever in joy and sorrow," and as a consequence, is admitted to their confidence, and even in their secular affairs, when thought necessary, is asked for his advice and counsel. This is the man who, provided he possesses understanding and judgment above all others, is prepared to put a true estimate upon the characters of each of the members of such a family.

All the surviving members of it, I am assured, will testify that such was the position occupied by your humble servant in the family of Abraham Lincoln—to say nothing of his calls upon myself and our pleasant conversations in drives over the prairies. During seven years when he and myself were at home, scarcely two weeks ever passed during which I did not spend a pleasant evening in the midst of that family circle; and my intercourse with himself thus continued until Abraham Lincoln was not only an honest, but prominently an upright man—ever ready, so far as in his power, to render unto all their just dues—and that he was utterly incapable of withholding from the bride he led to the altar that which was her due, by giving her a heart dead and buried in the grave of another, but that, in the deep and honest sincerity of his soul, he gave her a heart overflowing with love and affection; and my intercourse with him and his family left the abiding impression upon my mind, by his demeanor towards her, that he was to the wife of his bosom a most faithful, loving, and affectionate husband, who would on no occasion have insulted her by sending her a letter closing with "Your friend, Abraham Lincoln." I do most solemnly testify that during my oft-repeated visits I never saw a frown upon his brow or heard him utter a harsh or unkind word to his lady, or any of her children, but seemed overflowing with gentleness, good-humor, and kindness—clear proofs of his love and affection.

This, then, for the present, is the vindication of the character of the martyred President from the foul aspersions you, sir, have cast upon it; and by the reason whose high honor it was to place before Mr. Lincoln arguments designed to prove the Divine authority and inspiration of the Scriptures, accompanied by the arguments of infidel objectors in their own language. To the arguments on both sides Mr. Lincoln gave a most patient, impartial, and searching investigation. To use his own language, he examined the arguments as a lawyer who is anxious to reach the truth investigates testimony. The result was the announcement by himself that the argument in favor of the Divine authority and inspiration of the Scriptures was unanswerable.

I could say much more on this subject, but, as you are the person addressed, for the present I decline. This much, however: The preparation of that work cost me long and arduous mental labor, and if no other effect was ever produced by it than the influence it exerted upon the mind of that man whose name thrills the heart of every patriotic American, I thank God that I was induced to undertake the work. I amated to be made by you in your "Ann Rutledge" romance, followed by the letter from yourself—to which this is a reply—not only opened the way before, but, in my judgment, rendered it my imperative duty to speak out as I have done, and thus to rebuke the false friend, who, when their natural head and protector could no longer defend them, has entered into the sacred sanctuary of Mrs. Lincoln's family, has dragged its sorrow-stricken members from before its altar, and held them up to the public gaze as the love and affection to bestow upon them. The assassin Booth, by his diabolical act, unwittingly sent the illustrious martyr to glory, honor, and immortality; but his false friend has attempted to send him down to posterity with infamy branded on his forehead, as a man who, notwithstanding all he did and all he suffered for his country's good, was destitute of those feelings and affections without which there can be no real excellence of character. Sir, I am, with due respect, your obedient servant.

JAMES SMITH, N. B. It will no doubt be gratifying to the friends of Christianity to learn that very shortly after Mr. Lincoln became a member of my

congregation, at my request, in the presence of a large assembly, at the annual meeting of the Bible Society of Springfield, he delivered an address, the object of which was to inculcate the importance of having a Bible placed in the possession of every family in the State. In the course of his address he drew a striking contrast between the Decalogue and the moral codes of the most eminent lawgivers of antiquity, and closed (as near as I can recollect) in the following language:—"It seems to me that nothing short of Infinite Wisdom could by any possibility have devised and given to man this excellent and perfect moral code. It is suited to men in all the conditions of life, and includes all the duties they owe to their Creator, to themselves and their fellow-men."

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